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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 006256

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PARIS FOR ZEYA; LONDON FOR TSOU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQIS ARRIVE IN DAMASCUS TO RUN OCV

REF: DAMASCUS 6165

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Stephen A. Seche, per 1.4 b,d.

¶1. (C) Sa'ad Samarai, an official of the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) in Basrah, told PolChief November 30 that he arrived with a team of one dozen Iraqis in Damascus in mid-November to plan out-of-country voting. At the bustling office he has rented in the suburb of Mezzeh, Samarai confirmed reporting reftel that they will open ten polling centers in Damascus, to house 40 polling stations, primarily in schools that the SARG has designated for OCV use. Samarai plans to hire some 400 temporary polling supervisors and election workers in the next few days and begin training them on OCV.

¶2. (C) To facilitate voting by Iraqis located in other cities and towns in Syria, the IECI is looking into renting buses to make the day trip from a few of the largest Syrian cities outside Damascus. When asked why the IECI did not establish polling centers in other cities, Samarai said it would not have been possible to exert sufficient control over the centers. Unlike last year, voters will be able to register and vote the same day, December 13-15. The largest concentration of Iraqis is located in the Damascus suburb of Saida Zainab.

¶3. (C) Samarai said that he is working closely with several SARG military officers in the Ministry of Interior and with the Deputy Head of the Office of International Organizations at the MFA. A robust publicity campaign is planned to publicize the voting and is just getting underway. So far the Syrians have not interfered but have demanded to review all publicity materials before they were distributed.

¶4. (C) With the IECI organizing the effort this year, the International Office of Migration (IOM), which organized the OCV in Syria last year, is not involved, said Samarai.  
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